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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Identical letters dated 9 May 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

We write to you once again to express our grave and increasing concerns regarding the plight of the thousands of Palestinian civilians, men, women, children and elected officials, imprisoned and detained by Israel, the occupying Power.

We must specifically draw the international community's urgent attention to the acute situation of more than 1,500 Palestinian prisoners, who have been on hunger strike for over three weeks — and are now in their 22nd day of hunger strike — in protest at their inhumane treatment in captivity and in a collective appeal for respect for their basic human rights. This hunger strike — named the Freedom and Dignity Strike — constitutes the largest such strike to date against the occupation's brutal practices of imprisonment and detention, in violation of international law, and, in particular, the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law and human rights law.

Without food intake for three weeks, the prisoners' health is rapidly declining and illnesses are increasing, imposing even further agony on them in captivity. Here, we must underscore that their hunger strike represents one of the most non-violent, peaceful actions that could possibly be taken under such conditions to draw attention to their plight. It is an action inflicting suffering and sacrifice on the prisoners themselves, along with their families and the Palestinian society as a whole that continues to witness this oppression and injustice being perpetrated by the occupation against the Palestinian people. The deterioration of the prisoners' situation and lack of remedy for their plight continues not only to heighten solidarity in their support, but also to heighten anger and tensions across the population in Occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem.

However, rather than responding to the prisoners' legitimate grievances and calls for humane treatment, including, an end to solitary confinement, torture, medical negligence and administrative detention, as well as for proper access to education, medical care and family visitation, Israel continues to ignore their appeals and to violate its legal obligations, particularly under the Fourth Geneva Convention. Dismissing the seriousness of the hunger strike and attempting to break

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the prisoners' will, the occupying Power has, instead, intensified its abuse and collective punishment of the prisoners, including by imposing solitary confinement, isolating, harassing, humiliating and further mistreating them and threatening to force-feed them.

At the same time, Israeli officials continue to incite the prisoners and have also resorted to cynical attempts to degrade the integrity of the hunger strike and cast doubt on its leaders. In this regard, claims by Israeli officials that the occupation's treatment of Palestinian prisoners and detainees "exceeds international standards" are appalling. How can the ill-treatment and torture of human beings — including both physical and psychological torture — and their inhuman degradation in any way be characterized or considered as in conformity with or exceeding international standards? Such claims are offensive, make a mockery of international law and must be rejected.

Considering the dangerous decline of the situation of the hunger-striking prisoners, many of whom are in a fragile condition, and the growing tensions on the ground, we call for serious attention to this crisis and for international intervention to demand and compel Israel's respect for its obligations as an occupying Power under international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, including as regards Palestinian prisoners and detainees in its captivity. Action is essential to avert further deterioration and avert loss of life and the destabilizing impact that such negative developments would have on the ground and on the prospects for peace.

We thus appeal for immediate efforts in response to the pleas of the hunger-striking prisoners, who are among the 6,500 Palestinians in Israeli prisons, appealing for respect for their basic rights, for their dignity and for their humanity. We call for an end to their abuse and for their humane treatment in captivity, while also reiterating our calls for their release and an end to Israel's daily arrest campaign, by which more and more innocent Palestinians continue to be imprisoned and added to the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who have tragically endured imprisonment or detention under this 50-year illegal Israeli foreign occupation.

We convey this appeal through you to the international community, hopeful for, and urging, the needed support and solidarity for the Palestinian people, including the Palestinian prisoners, at this critical time, in line with the long-standing political, legal and moral obligations regarding the question of Palestine and in line with the collective responsibilities incumbent on States under common article 1 of the Geneva Conventions.

This letter is in follow-up to our 610 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 28 April 2017 (A/ES-10/751-S/2017/376), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Feda **Abdelhady-Nasser**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.